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The report describes the results from a survey of the study-release policies of the 50 State correctional systems, the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The data reported are for the year 1971, and they were collected during 1972. Every correctional agency responded to the survey questionnaire and, of the 52 agencies contacted, 42 operated study-release programs at the time of the survey. Of a total of 3,087 offenders who had participated in study-release during the year, only 74 (2 percent) absconded from the program. Forty agencies indicated that study-release helped their rehabilitation efforts. (Author)

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A SURVEY OF THE STUDY-RELEASE POLICIES OF AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL AGENCIES

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Submitted to Seymour Brandwein, Associate Director of the Office of Research and Development, and to William Throckmorton, Project Officer, by John M. McKee, Director, Experimental Manpower Laboratory for Corrections, Rehabilitation Research Foundation, P. O. Box 3587, Montgomery, Alabama, 36109.

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This report describes the results from a survey of the study-release policies of the 50 state correctional systems, the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The data reported are for the year 1971 and they were collected during 1972. Every correctional agency responded to the survey questionnaire and, of the 52 agencies contacted, 42 operated study-release programs at the time of the survey. Of a total of 3,087 offenders who had participated in study-release during the year, only 74 (2%) absconded from the program. Forty agencies indicated that study-release helped their rehabilitation efforts.

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A SURVEY OF THE STUDY-RELEASE POLICIES OF AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL AGENCIES[1, 2]

Robert R. Smith,[3] John M. McKee,[4] and Michael A. Milan[5]

The use of study-release, the policy of extending to inmates the privilege of leaving correctional institutions to participate in community academic education and vocational training programs, is growing. The policy is new and represents a departure from the custodially oriented procedures which have, until only recently, been the hallmark of American correctional practices. Historically, the Quakers were the first group of prison reformers to introduce education in correctional institutions. Not only did they view education as an effective means of dealing with idleness in prison, but they also believed that offenders required exposure to religious readings to help accomplish the moral reformation they thought to be critical for rehabilitation. Hence, many offenders were taught to read in prison so that they might profit from the Bible and other religious writings. Those offenders who could read sat in small groups reading and quoting scripture and drawing parallels between these writings and their own "miserable" lives. It soon became evident to prison officials that moral reformation as practiced by the Quakers had little impact on morality or recidivism or, for that matter, on idleness in prison, and attempts to bring religion and moral reformation to criminal offenders fell from favor. More recent reformers, however, further developed the idea of educating offenders and, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, implemented in American correctional institutions a wider range of educational programs, including more comprehensive academic education and vocational skill training.

Today's correctional education programs are designed to deal with the practical needs of the offender after his release. Reading and arithmetic, for example, are taught so that the student who cannot read or do basic math will gain the skills necessary to function well in training and employment and to better manage other aspects of his personal life. Increasingly more advanced academic education and vocational training are being introduced on an individualized basis. The extent to which institutional academic education and vocational training programs help prepare the offenders for release is currently being evaluated. A number of reports indicate that the bulk of these programs are not adequately equipped to educate and train the offender and, as a result, are failing to prepare him for his eventual return to the community (President's Commission on Law Enforcement

and Administration of Justice, 1967a, 1967b; Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1971; Roberts, 1971, 1973; National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, 1973; Marsh, 1973).

Typically, these reports also point out corrections' increasing problem of staffing and equipping its institutions, citing inadequate or nonexistent funding as the main reason. Corrections will continue to experience difficulty in attracting qualified teachers and vocational educators until it is capable of offering qualified prospective employees the competitive salaries and working conditions they so justly demand. Finally, it is unreasonable to expect corrections to adequately prepare today's offender for today's world of work until it is permitted to replace yesterday's machinery, yesterday's equipment, and yesterday's technology. Allowing the offender access to the community has two distinct advantages over traditional programs in correctional institutions. First, it is probable that such a policy can alleviate many administrative problems, such as the staffing and the equipping of facilities. Second, and perhaps most important, the policy can provide a richer educational experience for the offender than that provided him behind the walls–richer, in the sense that the offender has a greater potential of being exposed to quality education, updated equipment, and current technology as well as socialization with "free-world" classmates and instructors.

The Survey

Although the study-release concept appears to offer corrections a viable alternative and/or supplement to its established educative practices, little information has been collected concerning how widespread and successful it has become. For these reasons, it seemed appropriate to survey American corrections to determine how extensive the use of study-release was, how effective the policy seemed to be, and possibly offer some direction for the expansion of such programs based on current practices. Such a survey has been conducted, and a report of the results follows.

Method and Procedure

A questionnaire regarding study-release policies was sent to the directors of the 50 state departments of corrections and to the directors of the District of Columbia Department of Corrections and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. All 52 directors responded. The questionnaire, which defined study-release as any educational program for incarcerated adult felons in which inmates leave the institution to engage in such a program in the

community, requested copies of laws or policies relating to study-release (if applicable) and posed the following 11 questions:[6]

1. Do you have a study-release program operating in your correctional system?
2. What is the basis for your study-release program?
3. How long has the study-release program been practiced in your correctional system?
4. Who may participate in your study-release program?
5. Which educational area(s) does (do) your study-release program currently encompass?
6. How many inmates were involved in each of the subcategories of study-release listed in question 5 for the year beginning January 1, 1971, and ending December 31, 1971?
7. What factor(s) is (are) being considered when selecting a study-release candidate?
8. What is the average census of the inmate population during the reporting period?
9. What type of offender is prohibited from entering the program?
10. How many offenders absconded from the study-release program during the reporting period?
11. In your opinion, does the study-release program help your rehabilitation efforts?

Results

Number of study-release programs and how they are authorized. As indicated in Table 1, 40 states, the D. C. Department of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons reported study-release operative in their correctional systems during 1971. Ten states (Alabama, Arizona, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia) reported that they had no such program. However, Massachusetts indicated that legislation was pending which would authorize study-release, and West Virginia had enacted legislation for such a program but had not implemented one as yet. Of the 40 states that were operating study-release, 20 indicated that their program was authorized by law, 8 reported that they operated their program in accordance with an administrative policy, and 12 indicated that they operated under the provisions of both a law and administrative policy. The D. C. Department of Corrections and the Federal Bureau of Prisons reported that both a law and an administrative policy were in effect in their respective systems.

When study-release began and who participates. Connecticut, reporting implementation in 1959, was the first state to establish a study-release program. Connecticut's lead was followed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, in 1965. As indicated in Table 1, during the following 5 years (1966-1970), an additional 25 states and the District of Columbia introduced study-release programs. An additional 14 agencies reported the implementation of the program in 1971. Thirty-six of the 40 states operating study-release programs, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the D. C. Department of Corrections indicated that both men and women are allowed to participate. California reported that only women are allowed to participate, and three states (Iowa, Rhode Island, and Wyoming) reported they allow only men.

TABLE 1

Length of Time Study-Release in Operation Reported by Correctional Agencies

Years	Number of Agencies Reporting	Percentage of Agencies Reporting
1960 and before	1	2
1961-1965	1	2
1966-1970	25	60
1971	14	33
No response	1	2

The community programs attended by study-release participants. Thirty-eight states reported that they had study-releasees participating in college programs. Multiple program participation was reported by many states, including vocational programs (32 states), regular high school (8 states), adult basic education that included night school instruction (7 states), private business college, and hair dressing school (3 states). The D. C. Department of Corrections reported that study-releasees were participating in college and vocational school programs while the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicated participation in adult basic education, high school, college, and vocational school programs.

The largest number of offenders on study-release were in vocational schools. As shown in Table 2, almost 1,400 men and women were participating in such programs. Slightly less than 400 men and women were attending high school, and over 700 were attending college. Approximately 300 men and women were in other adult basic education programs.

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The D. C. Department of Corrections reported that 250 men were in college and 112 were in vocational school during the reporting period. The Federal Bureau of Prisons failed to respond to this item.

TABLE 2

Number of Study-Release Participants by Category and by Abscondence*

Agencies Reporting	College	Vocational School	High School	Night School (ABE)	Other (See text)	Total in Program	Number Absconded	Percent Absconded
Alaska	30	40	0	4	3	77	0	0
Arkansas	1	63	39	92	0	195	0	0
California	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colorado	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Connecticut	47	122	50	0	0	219	0	0
Delaware	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
District of Columbia	250	112	0	0	0	362	5	1
Federal Bureau	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Did not respond to these items - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -							
Florida	5	54	0	0	33	92	3	3
Georgia	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Hawaii	2	3	0	0	0	5	0	0
Idaho	6	5	0	0	6	17	2	1
Illinois	10	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
Indiana	10	3	6	0	0	19	2	1
Iowa	4	20	0	40	0	64	4	6
Kansas	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
Louisiana	1	11	0	0	0	12	0	0
Maine	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Maryland	99	30	1	0	0	130	3	2
Michigan	10	70	40	0	0	120	0	0
Minnesota	9	10	0	0	0	19	0	0
Missouri	8	0	0	0	0	8	0	0
Montana	3	9	0	0	10	22	1	5
Nebraska	3	0	0	0	2	5	0	0
New Hampshire	3	3	0	0	2	8	1	13
New Jersey	30	23	0	0	0	53	No response	
New Mexico	6	0	0	0	43	49	0	0
New York	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
North Carolina	18	286	1	106	0	411	32	8
North Dakota	8	7	0	0	1	16	0	0
Ohio	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oregon	47	45	0	0	0	92	0	0
Pennsylvania	15	393	0	0	0	408	1	0
Rhode Island	3	4	0	0	0	7	1	14
South Carolina	4	19	0	0	0	23	0	0
South Dakota	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Tennessee	32	0	200	0	0	232	12	5
Utah	6	20	0	0	0	26	0	0
Vermont	12	17	25	65	0	119	2	2
Washington	- - - - - - - - - - Reported an estimate of 150 but did not categorize - - - - - - - - - -							
Wisconsin	61	29	0	7	0	97	5	5
Wyoming	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Totals	763	1,398	362	314	100	3,087 (Including Washington)	74	2

*Information based on year beginning January 1, 1971, and ending December 31, 1971.

Factors considered in the selection of study-release candidates. Factors given to respondents to rank included *offense, time served on sentence, custody grade, educational need*, and an *"other"* category. Eight states considered the custody grade to be of primary importance; seven, the educational need; five, the time served on sentence; and four, the offense. The D. C. Department of Corrections ranked custody grade first; time served on sentence, second; ability and motivation for college work, third; offense, fourth; and educational need, fifth. The Federal Bureau of Prisons ranked the amount of time served on sentence first; custody grade, second; educational need, third; and offense, fourth. Nine states checked every factor but did not rank them. Regarding all other states, there does not appear to be an established pattern for the selection of study-release candidates, since they checked, but did not rank some or all of the items.

Fourteen states indicated that no factor prohibits participation in study-release. The remaining states indicated multiple prohibitions, including notorious offenses (11 states), sex offenses (11 states), narcotic and drug offenses (6 states), and alcohol offenses (4 states). Seven states failed to respond to this item. The D. C. Department of Corrections indicated that no factor prohibits participation in study-release except the length of time left to serve in the institution. A study-release candidate in the D. C. Department of Corrections must be within six months of parole. The Federal Bureau of Prisons reported, "All persons are considered on an individual basis. No person is denied participation based only on offense."

Twenty-three states indicated that candidates for study-release have to be in minimum custody grade before they are eligible for the program; six states indicated that study-release candidates have to be in medium custody; and four states indicated that there are no custody requirements for selection. Eight states failed to respond to this item. The D. C. Department of Corrections reported that candidates for study-release must be either in minimum or medium custody grade, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicated that candidates for study-release have to be in minimum custody.

Abscondence rate. Slightly more than 2% of the more than 3,000 inmates who participated in all forms of study-release absconded during the reporting period. The relationship between the number of offenders participating in a study-release program and the percentage of abscondence experienced by that program was small and not significant ($r = .11$, $df = 34$, $p > .05$). North Carolina, which reported one of the higher percentages of abscondence (8%), also had the highest number of study-release participants (411),

while Pennsylvania, which reported the second highest number of study-release participants (408), experienced less than one percent abscondence.

Administrators' opinions concerning study-release. Thirty-eight state respondents indicated that their study-release policy helped their rehabilitation efforts. No state claimed that it did not help. Two states (New York and Ohio) claimed that they did not know, with the state of Ohio reporting "we hope" that it does. The state of New York observed that the "small number participating does not permit generalization, but, if education and vocational training do not help rehabilitation efforts, what else is there?" The D. C. Department of Corrections and the Federal Bureau of Prisons both indicated that study-release helped their rehabilitation efforts.

Discussion

The number of American correctional agencies that have adopted study-release programs has increased drastically since 1966. This increase parallels an increase in the utilization of the unsupervised home-furlough, another community-based program recently surveyed (Smith & Milan, 1973). The use of study-release is, however, more widespread than the use of the home-furlough. Although only 25 correctional agencies reported unsupervised home-furlough programs in operation at the time of that survey, a large majority (40) of the states, the D. C. Department of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons had a study-release policy. The feasibility of both programs, as indexed by abscondence, is remarkably high. The mean percentages of abscondence from both are below 3%. On the average, then, slightly less than three offenders per 100 abscond from such programs. Although the 3% abscondence rate is low, there is reason to believe that even this figure is misleading, for it fails to detail the nature of the abscondences. In the Smith and Milan survey of home-furlough policies, it was indicated that the bulk of abscondences were technical in nature, resulting primarily from inmates' inattention to time schedules, problems in securing transportation, etc. Virtually none of the abscondences from home-furloughs were attributed to the commission of new crimes. The results from both surveys indicate that those who base their criticism on such arguments do so in the face of facts contrary to this hypothesis. When the actual number of participants and incidents of abscondence in study-release are examined, it becomes evident that the numbers in both are very small. During the year for which data were reported, a total of 3,087 offenders participated in study-release programs throughout the country.

Of this total, only 74 absconded. Of particular note is the fact that one-half (22) of the 37 agencies that had study-release participants reported no abscondence.

As indicated, there was no relationship between the numbers of offenders participating in study-release programs and the percentage of abscondence experienced by such programs. However, this finding requires additional exploration, since each agency's reported number of participants in study-release is low when compared to their respective populations. Rates of abscondence should then be evaluated cautiously, since the requirements for participation in study-release programs appear to be exceedingly restrictive. Other implications of such limited study-release participation are evident, as well. First, it is likely that each agency has selected its "best risks" or has creamed the offender population. Until more offenders are considered eligible and are randomly assigned to such programs, allowing for group comparisons, the rehabilitative value of such programs cannot be accurately determined. Another implication of limited participation is the yet-to-be measured effects of limited and oftentimes arbitrary selection policies on the offenders left behind in the institution. It is probable that those offenders who are left behind view such a selection policy as a continuing effort on the part of the "system" to discriminate against them. Any form of actual or perceived discrimination contributes to potential unrest and disturbance within the institution.

If study-release or similar community-based programs are proven to be viable alternatives to institutional programs, it is probable that many more offenders could be given the opportunity to take part in them. The resulting freedom to include more offenders in such programs might have a potential for reducing the threat of unrest in institutions. Not only is the threat of unrest potentially reduced, but there would also be a diminishing need to duplicate such programs inside the institution. The anticipated savings in funds from the expansion of study-release would seem, in itself, to generate, among correctional administrators, a closer examination of the effects of such programs. The existing study-release programs provide opportunities for evaluation and experimentation. If these programs prove effective, and policies regarding them can be better explicated, then wider participation can be anticipated. It is certainly an area in which a worthwhile contribution to the evolution of penology can be made.

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Footnotes

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[6]A copy of the complete questionnaire may be obtained from the authors.